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Building Jerusalem



The INQUIRER

THE UNITARIAN AND FREE CHRISTIAN PAPER

Established 1842

The Inquirer is the oldest

Nonconformist religious newspaper

"To promote a free and inquiring religion through the worship of God and the celebration of life; the service of humanity and respect for all creation; and the upholding of the liberal Christian tradition."

*From the Object passed at the
General Assembly of the Unitarian and
Free Christian Churches 2001*

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Inquiring Words

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens:

a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot,
a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build,
a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance,
a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace
and a time to refrain from embracing,
a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep
and a time to throw away,
a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak,
a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace.

– Ecclesiastes 3

Unitarian General Assembly President's 2011 Message

The enthusiasm which I have experienced among Unitarians in 2010 has been infectious. There is so much optimism and many congregations are encouraged by an increase in visitors many of whom return. They grow to appreciate the loving nature of their local Unitarian community.

Let's continue in 2011 to offer our friendship and hospitality to those who seek the free and tolerant religion which we embrace.

During my many visits to our varied congregations I have tried to emphasise my theme for the year which is 'Nurture your Freedom'. Unless we recognise that we are uniquely free to practice our religion unconfined by the fetters of orthodoxy, we might as well not exist!

Increasingly there are those who strive to emphasise our true relevance in today's constantly changing world. Let's pray that during 2011 an even greater number of our congregations and leaders will develop a contemporary appeal to those local seekers who would like to make a home with us.

We have developed an excellent web site and together with our promotional literature we project the ideal essence of Unitarianism. Let's resolve to work together in ensuring that visitors are not disappointed. They are expecting us to offer something different from other churches. Let's give it to them.

I wish you all a Happy New Year – wherever on our belief spectrum you happen to be at present.

– Neville Kenyon

Building 'Jerusalem'

They may not seem like it, but the three first articles in this issue share a common thread. They ask us what kind of society we will build and what we Unitarians and Free Christians can do for the people who arrive at our chapel doors.

Cliff Reed's words about the beautiful hymn, 'Jerusalem' may seem to have little in common with Chris Wilson's call to speak out about the current financial and political situation. But it strikes me that both articles call us to build a Jerusalem in the here and now. Ant Howe's idea that our churches can act as ATMs for the soul, nourishing and replenishing what the world drains, challenges us both to care for each other and to reach out – to create Jerusalem.

Tell us about volunteers

To coincide with this year's General Assembly theme of honouring volunteers, The Inquirer is planning a series on voluntary work. We are interested in stories about people in the movement who give their time to causes and organisations outside their Unitarian community. We are seeking a wide variety of participants. So if you, or someone you know, is involved in voluntary work, please contact Kate Taylor at kate@airtime.co.uk

– MC Burns

Building Jerusalem is our task

By Clifford M Reed

If you were to hold a referendum for the purpose of choosing an *English* national anthem, the chances are that William Blake's 'Jerusalem' would win by a considerable margin. It is sung enthusiastically by a wide variety of people from across a broad spectrum of social, political, and even religious affiliations. And yet, all is not as it seems.

For a start, although William Blake wrote it some time between 1804 and 1808, during the Napoleonic Wars, it was not until a century later, during the First World War, that Charles Hubert Parry set it to the tune that we sing today. Secondly (and confusingly!), although we *call* it 'Jerusalem', it doesn't actually come from Blake's poem, 'Jerusalem'! Rather, it is the opening of another of his epic poems, 'Milton'.

And thirdly, although we usually see it as a celebration of the rural English idyll, as opposed to the grimy cities of the industrial revolution, this is not really what it's about. Blake's, 'dark Satanic mills', are primarily the mills of the mind when it is obsessed with measuring and dividing the Earth – as depicted in his famous picture of Isaac Newton (see cover). These mills, Blake believed, crushed the spirit and the imagination; the things that make us truly human. Only indirectly did they relate to the factories – those other 'mills' – of the industrial Midlands and North, which Blake never visited. In any case, Blake was writing some time before the industrial revolution – and its grim impact on the English landscape – reached its zenith later in the 19th century.

Blake's 'Jerusalem' is actually about the mental and spiritual conflict between two ways of being human. It is a struggle, portrayed in mythic terms, for the soul of England in particular – which Blake saw as representative of the world and, potentially, as the exemplar for all humanity. And if that sounds a bit like ancient Israel's view of itself as the 'Chosen People', that's because Blake saw it in precisely those terms.

Some while ago, the Church of England Synod debated

whether or not the hymn, *Jerusalem*, should be allowed at weddings and funerals, when it is often requested. I was rather surprised that this was even a matter for discussion, especially when one considers some of the bizarre material that one hears at many such occasions nowadays.

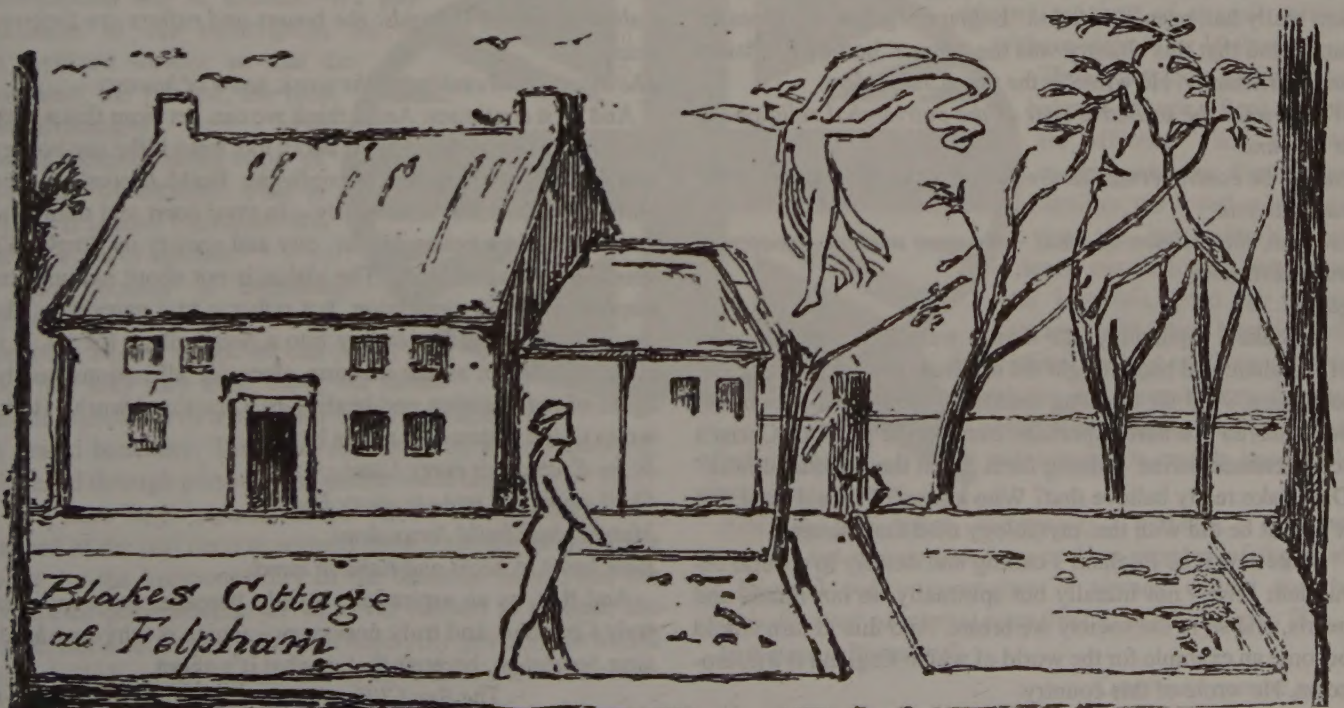
Jerusalem has appeared in Unitarian hymn books since the 1920s, in fact, ever since it was set to music by Parry. But in the Church of England, it seems, even though it is in their hymns books too, it is looked on with suspicion, at least by some. One objection is that it isn't really a hymn, and wasn't written as one. Saint Augustine of Hippo defined a hymn as, 'the praise of God in song,' but some take this a bit further and say that a true hymn must be addressed directly to God as the object of worship.

I think I would want to define a hymn as a song that expresses such things as praise, faith, thanksgiving, celebration, resolution, and aspiration in a religious context. And that's why, for me, Parry's setting of Blake's verse is, indeed, a hymn – and a truly great one at that!

But the definition of a hymn was not the only factor in the Synod debate. Rather, the complaint was that people were requesting *Jerusalem* without understanding what it's about. The implication here, I suppose, is that *Jerusalem* is somehow inherently unsuitable to be sung in church. If not understanding what a hymn is about were really the criterion for rejecting it, then a great many well-known hymns would fail the test. And this is especially so at weddings and funerals, when so many of those in the congregations these days have little or no knowledge of religion of any kind.

But they do like *Jerusalem*. Its imagery, combined with Parry's music, touches them at a far deeper level than the superficial 'rationalistic' understanding that the objectors seem to require. And, of course, this is what Blake would have wanted, given his fervent belief in the power of the imagination and his

(Continued on next page)



Heart in heart, hand in hand

(Continued from previous page)

suspicion of those dull, narrow-minded, soul-destroying, 'dark Satanic mills.' As he described them in the poem, *Jerusalem: cruel Works*

Of many Wheels I view, wheel without wheel, with cogs tyrannic,

Moving by compulsion each other; not as those in Eden ...

In a sense it isn't necessary to 'know' what *Jerusalem* is about to understand it. It isn't that kind of poetry. If it moves you, if it stirs your imagination, then Blake will have achieved his end – at least, in part.

But this doesn't mean that we shouldn't examine Blake's imagery if we want to come to a fuller understanding of what he wrote, and so to see what it could mean for us, whatever it meant for him 200 years ago.

Now, it should be said that 'understanding' William Blake is no straightforward matter. His was a remarkable and truly idiosyncratic genius. Even his beloved wife, Catherine, was not privy to the innermost recesses of his mind and imagination. She once told a friend, 'I have very little of Mr. Blake's company, he is always in Paradise.'

The hymn we know as *Jerusalem* comes out of the utterly unique mythology that Blake constructed for the English nation, taking and blending elements from the Bible, from Celtic myth, from Milton, and from other sources too. In *Jerusalem* we see the idea – probably mythical for Blake but literal for some others at the time – that ancient Israel and ancient Jerusalem really had been situated in 'England's green and pleasant land,' and that this country was the original home of Judaism and Christianity. He wrote in the poem *Jerusalem*:

Was Britain the primitive seat of the patriarchal religion? It is true and

cannot be controverted. Ye are united, O ye inhabitants of the earth, in one

religion, the religion of Jesus – the most ancient, the eternal and everlasting gospel.

In Blake's mythology, the Druids were the contemporaries of Abraham and had brought the original 'patriarchal religion' to Britain. And all the long drama of the Jewish nation had been played out here – perhaps even to the point of Christ's 'countenance divine' shining forth 'upon those clouded hills.' Did Blake really believe that? Who knows? Probably not, but it's what he did with that mythology next that matters.

Blake saw it as England's calling and destiny to rebuild Jerusalem here – not literally but spiritually, in our minds and hearts, and so in the society we create. And this in turn would become an example for the world of which England is a microcosm. He wrote of this country:

What do I see? The Briton, Saxon, Roman, Norman amalgamating in

my furnaces into One Nation, the English.

But it doesn't stop there, for Blake goes on, in *Jerusalem*, to give this a universal dimension, combined with his own distinctive and gloriously unorthodox concept of the Universal Christ. He writes:

...we behold as one,

As One Man all the Universal Family; and that One Man

We call Jesus the Christ: and he in us and we in him, Live in perfect harmony in Eden, the land of life, Giving, receiving, and forgiving each other's trespasses.

Jerusalem was, for Blake, the mythic symbol of what we should make of our country, a task with global significance. He writes:

Let every Christian as much as in him lies engage himself openly and publicly before all the World in some Mental pursuit for the Building up of Jerusalem.

And Blake says what this should mean in his own city of London:

Is that Mild Zion's hill's most ancient promontory, near mournful,

Ever weeping Paddington?

Is that Calvary and Golgotha?

Becoming a building of pity and compassion? Lo!

The stones are pity and the bricks, well-wrought affections:

Enam'd with love and kindness, and the tiles engraven gold

Labour of merciful hands: the beams and rafters are forgiveness:

The mortar and cement of the work, tears of honesty ...

And so it continues. And I think we can get from this a very clear idea of what the hymn is about too, even if the mythology and the imagery may appear confusing. Build *Jerusalem* – the Holy City, the ideal community – in your heart and mind and you will build a better, kinder, city and society in 'England's green and pleasant land.' The vision is not about nationalism imperialism, and aggression, but rather a true patriotism: the desire to make one's country into a better place for all. It is about the nation as the meeting place for all nations; as the agent of regeneration and healing in a fractured world. Blake wrote of the nation as it might be:

In my Exchanges every Land

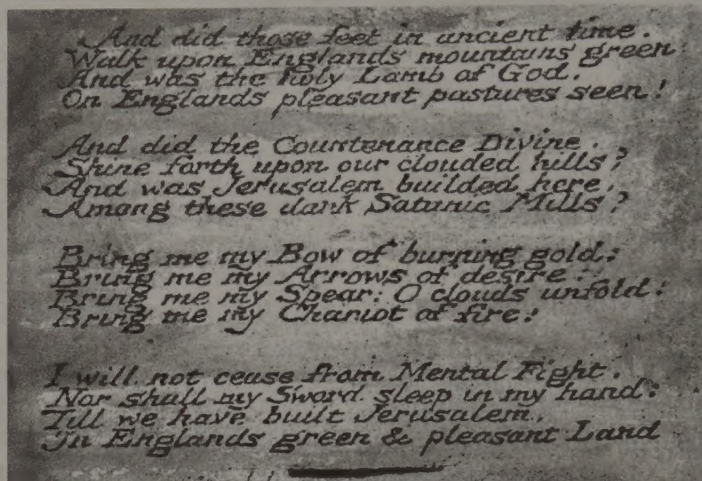
Shall walk, and mine in every Land,

Mutual shall build Jerusalem:

Both heart in heart and hand in hand

And that, as an aspiration, is truly humane, truly spiritual, truly Christian, and truly necessary – which is why we should sing *Jerusalem*, because that is what it's about.

The Rev Clifford M Reed is minister at Ipswich.



The words to 'Jerusalem', the hymn, in Blake's own hand. Taken from the preface of 'Milton, a poem'.

We are obliged to speak out

By Chris Wilson

One of the most important skills in life is that of judgment. When is it right to speak out? When is it best to be silent? This is true for all of us, but perhaps, particularly true of clergy; who in a real sense are representatives of the church, opinion-leaders within their communities.

Still, as ministers, we are expected to speak out. After all, we have the Gospel to share, and much of that means placing our lives under judgment. We have the example of Christ, as he calls on us to love God with all that we are, and to love our neighbour as ourselves. But what about, the wider world we inhabit? Should clergy ever make statements or comments about institutional injustice or political wrong-doing?

Our Gospel is social as well as personal. I think we *do* have a responsibility to speak out. But real care is needed, lest by speaking, we cause unnecessary division. We need always to understand that comprises a plurality of social and political views; all the colours of the rainbow. Churches unite to worship God, to follow Jesus, not to be a recruiting sergeant for this or that political party. All of this has to be brought to mind, before making judgments; especially on economic or social questions.

Having said all this, I am concerned.

This coming year, will see spending cuts which are unprecedented; and this worries me. The church is a covenant community. Society too, in comprising a community of communities; is defined no less by a covenant; and this one though unspoken, is no less real.

It goes something like this: we all have obligations one to another. We pay taxation as our subscription for a civilized society; so that the weakest, the poorest, the most disadvantaged, will have some prospect, some hope, of succour, of security. That is right. It is also Christian. We are all, one of another.

This security is expressed through a network of universal benefits; all pay in, and all can claim; not that they may need them; but rather as an expression of a common social solidarity, a shared humanity. This is all supported by public spending, financed through personal and institutional taxation.

We have large national debts. This, I do not doubt. Nor, indeed of the real need to address them – caused as they have been, by the irresponsibility of the financial sector, and the failure of governments (of whatever colour) to regulate the same. Let's not be party political here. Any government would have bailed out the banks; not to have done so, would have

caused hardship unseen since the 1930s; indeed quite possibly worse...

So now, the money has to be clawed back.

But why should the poorest pay for the mistakes of the richest?

This I do not understand.

Why should the social covenant be destroyed to finance the irresponsibility, the greed of the very few?

What has happened so far?

Universality of child benefit has ended. Education Maintenance Allowances scrapped. (As a former FE Lecturer for some 16 years, I can tell you that these supported the poorest of students who were returning to education often to study on apprenticeships – learning the skills that we all need.)

The VAT rate has gone up – even though VAT, as a tax on consumption, disproportionately penalises those who spend a higher proportion of their income – that is, the poorest.

Tuition fees may go up to £9,000 per annum. That will result in graduates' debts of £30,000 or more, levied by those who benefitted from free Higher Education. Those who have already scurried up it are taking up the ladder.

Then we have massive spending cuts.... We'll know soon enough if the anticipated job losses are accurate; some 500,000 across the public sector (some 10,000 in Northern Ireland alone, according to the local press here).

In local government, 87,304 redundancy notices have already been issued across 107 councils (Source: GMB union, which is logging the number of statutory redundancy notices received), and those remaining in the public sector face pay freezes or cuts. The Police and the armed services will also be cut – resulting in the bizarre prospect of aircraft carriers without aircraft for 10 years.

These are not numbers on balance sheets. Real people are affected. They are our congregants, our friends, our families, our loved ones. They work in our schools, they teach our children, they serve our hospitals, keep our streets clean and safe. They keep us safe from crime, protect us from terrorist outrages; and by-and-large, they are professionals trying to make best will become, a rapidly impossible

of what I fear situation.

Add in one more significant variable: Interest rates will not remain low forever. One member of the Bank of England policy committee is already calling for the 'normalization' of interest rates (that is, anything up to 5%).

Is there an alternative?

(Continued on next page)

Perhaps our churches could a

By Ant Howe

It was on Wednesday afternoon when I checked my bank account and realised something was wrong. There was less money than there should've been!

Now I will admit that when it comes to keeping track of my finances I'm not the most organised person in the world. But even I could see there was money missing. I hurried home from the cash machine and logged into my bank account online.

There were lots of transactions listed which I knew I hadn't made ... and all these transactions added up to quite a tidy sum of money that was missing.

With my heart in my mouth, I phoned my bank. We went through every recent transaction and I indicated which ones I knew were mine, and which ones weren't. By the end, I realised that over £300 had been taken from my bank account.

The woman on the end of the phone assured me that my card was now blocked and that no more money could be taken out of my account. I then asked the question, 'What about the money that has been stolen?'

'Oh, we'll put that back for you' she said.

'That's very nice of you' I said 'but where do YOU get that money from to put it back?'

'Oh it's all part of the service' she said, 'If money gets taken from you and it isn't your fault then the bank will replace it.'

I thanked her profusely for this, but I had one more question: 'How did those people get into my account to steal the money?'

'Oh' she said 'unfortunately it's quite easy. They somehow cloned your bank details and have been spending money on phones pretending to be you, but don't worry we'll send you a new card with new details and everything should be back to normal.'

And with that the call ended.

I have to admit feeling a little shell-shocked by the whole affair. The fact that someone can get my bank details and pretend to be me is rather unsettling!

But it got me thinking about life generally. Aren't there times in life that you feel you're being drained or bled dry?

There are times when others take our energy and our time. Sometimes we're glad to give of those things because we want to help, and other times people take from us whether we want them to or not.

I'm sure we all know people that leave us feeling drained after being in their company for half an hour!

It's at those times, when we feel we have nothing left to give, that we are left feeling vulnerable.

Somehow we need to replace those reserves. But how do we do it?

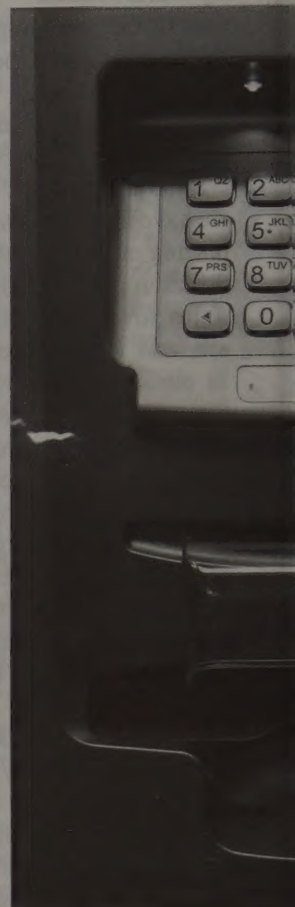
I think back to what the woman at the bank said to me, 'It's all part of the service. If something is taken from you and it's not your fault, we'll put it back.'

Well that sounds like a great service. I wonder if our church services should do the same thing?

Personally, I think they should.

Wouldn't that be a great advert for us:

'If something is taken from you and it's not your fault, we'll put it back.'



We have an obligation to speak out

(Continued from previous page)

One which doesn't fracture the covenant, placing even the unity, of the United Kingdom at risk? There is, and it means placing once more the notion of community; and of social solidarity at the very heart of our national life.

We could have a longer time frame for restoring a positive balance to the nation's finances; after all we have done this before. Britain was bankrupt after World War II – and we didn't require an immediate return to the financial black within a politically driven, limited, time frame.

We could invest in public services; understanding that it is better to pay for someone to be in work, than to pay for them to be made redundant and then paid to be unemployed.

We could introduce the 'Robin Hood' tax, which would raise millions by taxing financial transactions within the City of London. (A concept endorsed by a resolution passed at the General Assembly meetings in 2010.)

We could replace VAT with a proper system of progressive taxation – one which taxes income and not consumption.

We could replace tuition fees with a Graduate Tax.

We could have a serious discussion about a national maximum wage. There is something morally wrong when millionaires tell most of us that we must tighten our belts. We are not 'in it together'; we are simply 'in it', they're not 'in it'

at all.

We could look at the whole bonus culture, which has institutionalized greed. I am pleased that the head of the airport authority has decided not to take his £900,000 bonus. But really, £900,000....What has happened to our moral compass? Or our sense of social obligation? Can I remind you, that the average wage in the UK is around £24,000 per year; with many, many thousands earning significantly less.

We could ask all of our politicians, of whatever colour, what they will do to promote social cohesion, and in a proper sense, a true solidarity between – and within – all of the nations, peoples, faiths, and individuals of the United Kingdom.

And, yes, we could understand when and why trade unionists protest. After all they are, in large measure, us – our families, our friends, our communities. Though protests should always be democratic, focused and peaceful – lest they lose the legitimacy they, and we, need them to have.

I am worried about 2011 – and all that is planned.

There must be a better way than this. And, if there isn't, then as it says in *Ecclesiastes* 3:7, surely:

It is 'a time to speak out'.

The Rev Chris Wilson MA is minister at Moneyreagh Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church, County Down.

as ATMs for members' souls

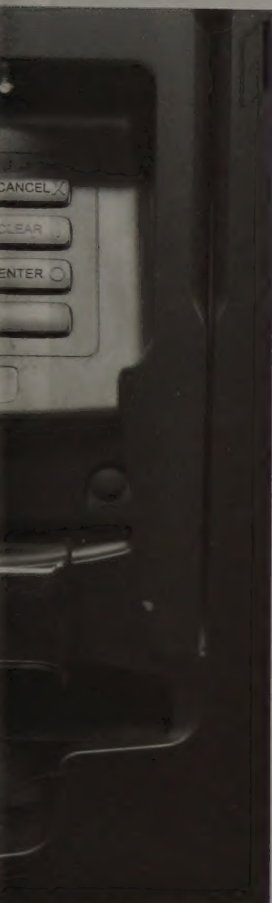


Photo by Adrian van Leen

If someone has drained you of your energy or confidence – we'll help to put it back.

If someone has robbed by telling you you're not good enough – we'll help to put it back.

If you're robbed of a relationship with God because you've been told that God doesn't approve of who you are or what you do – we'll help to put it back.

It's all part of the service!

When a church like ours is working well then our worship generates energy. Our worship touches the soul. It restores, it heals, and it replenishes our spirits.

Sometimes people say to me 'I need to be here because it gives me strength for the week ahead' and I can very much relate to that. The act of coming to worship helps to restore me when my spiritual reserves are low.

I believe that when we worship we connect with a never failing fund: a deep fund of wisdom, grace, and love. A fund that has more than enough reserves for us, no matter how we are feeling and no matter what we have lost or had taken from us.

I also think back to my bank situation. Someone was able to take money from me by using my name. They misrepresented me and I suffered as a result.

That's true in life too. We all love a good gossip. The juicier the gossip the better it is and the quicker it spreads. But when we misrepresent someone, and when we use their name in vain, we do them damage. If the things we are saying about a person isn't strictly true then we are making them into something they aren't. We steal their true identity just as surely as whoever it was stole mine and took money out of my bank account.

I got a new bank card and the money I lost was put back into my account. In a way it is as if nothing happened. But of course, I'll remember and sadly I might be a little less trusting for a while as a result.

It's always sad when humans don't act in the best way they can. Unitarians are fond of saying that we look for the worth and dignity in all. It's sad then when that worth and dignity is hard to find in someone. But again, coming to church and being part of a community where we *can* trust one another makes a huge difference.

It takes time to build up trust, especially when we've been bruised in the past. Sometimes people come to a Unitarian church for the first time and they can't see how it could possibly work. How can you have a church where there are no beliefs set in stone? I'll tell you how: trust. We trust our members and friends to think seriously about what they believe. We trust our members and friends to respect the beliefs of others. And we trust that our members and friends will always put love and tolerance at the forefront of their faith.

It's important that we do not betray that trust.

Unitarianism is unique. There's nothing like it. We've taken in our stride issues that are threatening to split other religious groups down the middle. That's not to say we don't have our own issues to deal with, because we do, but we have proved that the sky doesn't fall in when you risk thinking outside the box and let others do what they feel is right.

I've been reading *'Letters to my grandchildren'* by Tony Benn recently. Tony Benn is now 85 years old and this book is his book of advice to the younger generation of today.

He talks of the mainstream church being torn apart by the issue of women priests, women bishops, and homosexuality.

'The world is full of men who hate each other, and when two men love each other, the church splits!' he writes.

He considers how some people choose to live their lives and concludes: *'The one common thread in all of this is the need to respect other people and what they want to do. The only legitimate criticism is if these relationships damage other relationships or cause pain or hurt to those who are loved. If that happens the pleasures of some are bought at the expense of others'*

This brings me back to the concept of stealing from others.

'Thou shalt not steal' says the commandment – and I think that includes not stealing their right to be who they are, their right to worship how they want, their right to love who they want, and their right to grow and reach their full potential.

When we allow a vocal minority to tell others how to live and what they should do then *'pleasures of some are bought at the expense of others'*.

Fortunately, a Unitarian church – when it's working well – allows every person the freedom to be truly themselves, as long as they respect the freedom of others.

I want to return, briefly, to the idea of our church services replenishing our spirits and giving us back what has been taken from us. I believe that should be the case, but that can only happen because there are people here who are giving of themselves.

Whether they are preaching the sermon, providing the music, making the tea, washing up or doing any of the 101 other jobs that need to be done in order to keep the place running. All of this takes energy, and it's important that we respect that those who serve also need time to relax and replenish themselves.

Often we allow those who are willing to do the work to get on with it and we don't notice when they are running low on their personal resources. Part of being a loving, caring community is that we should look out for one another and not allow the willing helpers to be put upon too much.

I pray that whenever Unitarians gather for worship that it will help to restore what people have had taken from them: whether people need to worship, or laugh, or find friends, the Unitarian community is well placed to meet those needs with our unique approach to life and faith.

May our gatherings allow people to be truly themselves and to claim their true identity.

May our gatherings leave people feeling energised rather than drained.

May our gatherings connect people with God: the never failing fund of truth, wisdom, love and grace.

The Rev Ant Howe is minister at Kingswood and Warwick.

Orthodox Christians focus on beauty

By Jim Corrigan

Eastern Orthodox Christianity, while rooted in dogma and symbolism, is also a deeply mystical faith that can open the way to the mystery that lies beyond all symbols.

This paradox was highlighted by the Rev Canon Hugh Wybrew, when he gave the Lance Garrard Memorial Lecture at Cross Street Chapel, Manchester – an event organised by the Unitarian Christian Association (UCA). Canon Wybrew served as the Archbishop of Canterbury's official representative to the Orthodox Church in several Eastern European countries, and is a former dean of the Anglican Cathedral in Jerusalem.

The lecture was preceded by a communion service led by the Minister at Cross Street, the Rev Jane Barraclough. This celebration included hymns, and readings of prayer poems by Denise Levertov.

Canon Wybrew opened his 'Introduction to Orthodoxy' by reminding the more than 30 attenders that Christianity had begun in the Middle East and had been centred in the East in its early centuries. All the Ecumenical Councils of the early Church took place in Eastern Christendom, starting with the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD. These councils laid the basis for the trinity and other doctrines, and the Orthodox Church saw itself as grounded in these (it is often called 'the Church of the Seven Councils').

Yet at the heart of Orthodox worship is an attempt to create 'a sense of heaven' through overwhelming beauty – hence the incense, candles, shimmering lights, stained glass, rich colours, music, singing, and, above all, the icons.

Canon Wybrew used three Orthodox icons as a way of illustrating his subject. Icons, in the Eastern tradition, are more than mere visual aids – they are believed to bring the person or subject depicted alive to the believer.

The first icon, 'The Hospitality of Abraham', by the great 14th Century Russian painter Andrei Rublev, depicts the three messengers of God who appeared to Abraham under the oaks of Mamre in *Genesis*. This Biblical passage is seen by the



Canon Wybrew delivering the Lance Garrard lecture on Orthodoxy at Cross St Chapel. On his left are the three icons he used to illustrate his theme. Photo by Jim Corrigan

Orthodox as an Old Testament revelation of the trinity. In the icon, the three angels are depicted around a Eucharistic table, with the second angel in the centre (Christ) pointing at a sacrifice (a calf's head). But the fourth place, on the viewer's side, is vacant – this, the Canon said, invites all of us to come forward and share in God's light and love. Humans are invited to join the divine mystery, as the Orthodox believe that 'God became human so that human beings might become divine'.

The second icon depicts Jesus as the Word of God (the Logos) becoming human, while the third portrays the transfiguration of Christ (with Moses and Elijah on either side, and the disciples below being literally 'bowled over'). Canon Wybrew said this third icon aimed to show a human Jesus from whom the light of God shone out.

"For the Orthodox, all of us are called to become transparent to the love of God, as is the whole world. All of creation is destined to be transfigured," he said.

In thanking the speaker, the Rev Jeff Gould, moderator of the UCA, said it was important for Unitarians and Free Christians to deepen their understanding of other Christian traditions. Despite many differences between Orthodoxy and our own denomination, there were clearly points of contact. He cited the 19th Century Unitarian theologian James Martineau who said that the incarnation was true, 'not of Jesus exclusively, but of all humanity universally'.

During questions, Canon Wybrew spoke of how Orthodox influences are increasingly entering Western Christianity, not only theological ones, but in prayer and in a greater appreciation of the visual in Christian life.

Asked about mysticism, the Canon said that although Orthodox churchgoers believe in the power of icons, he suspected that if 'pressed hard', many would concede that ultimately they move beyond all symbols to encounter divine mystery.

This year's lecture began with a minute of silence to honour the politician and lifelong Unitarian, Sir Cyril Smith, who died in September. Sir Cyril was also a long-standing member of the UCA.

The Lance Garrard lectures are held annually to commemorate the distinguished Unitarian minister and scholar who helped found the UCA in 1991.

Jim Corrigan is a member of Golders Green Unitarians.

Ethics, ecology on the agenda



Croydon Unitarian Church hosts 'Ethics, Ecology And the Interdependent Web', planned for Saturday, 19 February, 10am to 3:30pm. It features the Rev Peter Owen Jones (of BBC 'Around the World in 80 Faiths'), Vinod Kapashi (Jain), Datuk Leslie Davidson, a world recognized expert on Palm Oil. (Datuk is an honour similar to Knighthood). Leslie, a Ditchling Unitarian, has written a book of insight and humour on his work in developing Palm Oil Plantations in Sabah, Borneo: East Of Kinabalu. He is shown (left) with the Rev Richard Boeke. A£5 donation requested, a bring-and-share lunch is planned. For more information, contact the Rev Boeke on r.boeke@virgin.net. Sponsored by the International Association for Religious Freedom

UALM enjoyed alternative worship

By Chrissie Wilkie

The Unitarian Association for Lay Ministry Conference was held at The Nightingale Unitarian Conference Centre, Great Hucklow in November. The theme this year was Alternative Worship, so some of us (me) went into this adventure with some trepidation! We held our Annual General Meeting on the Friday evening after introducing ourselves and stating our hopes for the conference.

The work started in earnest. In our first session, facilitated by Sue Woolley, we looked at the concept of ritual and ceremonial and how we already use these things without even realising it, how history has played a part in our current worship practices and the rituals we use now. Examples of this being chalice lighting, a recent addition to the services in many of our chapels and communion, which is celebrated in some of our chapels. The rituals observed at celebrations such as Mothering Sunday, Palm Sunday, Harvest Festival and Advent are not recognised universally, but many of us do observe these occasions.

Our next session with Sue involved a lot of head scratching when we split into groups to design our own rituals to celebrate Mothering Sunday, Summer Solstice and One World Week. After lunch we presented our work to the other delegates and I think we surprised ourselves at the variety in our efforts. I certainly would not be afraid of constructing my own ritual in future. The word can be off-putting, but when something is presented simply and with love it becomes an act of worship.

We were visited by the Rev Earnest Baker and the Rev Dr Vernon Marshall who, with Dawn Buckle and Winnie Gordon, were able to give those of us who are taking the Worship Studies Courses useful information about starting and continuing with our studies. They always try to make it sound achievable and it will be one day.

Oh but the dancing!! I have never done circle dancing before, but Dawn Buckle did her best to demystify it for us. Introducing us gently by looking at the movements we already use in our services from something as simple as sitting and standing, to offering communion, Dawn managed to get us



The Nightingale Unitarian Conference Centre still has some weekend openings for 2011.

all on our feet, performing simple movements. From there we progressed to a very simple circle dance, which even I managed to do with very little falling over.

After dinner we were treated to the observance of a labyrinth walk with Danielle Wilson. Again, I had never tried this, but was fascinated by the explanation of the history of this ancient practice. I had not understood the purpose of this meditating walk and the full implications of the usefulness for the participant.

UALM had been asked by the Old Chapel at Great Hucklow to present the Sunday service which was done with great gusto, orchestrated by Sue Woolley as a celebration of Diwali. We put into practice a number of things we had learnt including a dance celebrating the Legend of Rama and Sita. I hope that the congregation have recovered, although they did assure me that they must have the record of the highest number of alternative and experimental services in the Unitarian Movement.

We all look forward to our next conference on 25-27 November. Put the date in your diary. All laity are welcome – even if they are not members of UALM. We look forward to meeting other Unitarians at the General Assembly meetings in April. Do come along to our slot there. For more information on UALM see: <http://ualm.org.uk/>

Chrissie Wilkie is a Committee member of UALM.

UWG at Hucklow

The Unitarian Women's Group at their October gathering celebrated *Times of Change in Our Lives*, led by Cathie Masztalerz (middle row, second from left). Through pictures, words and actions, the ages of Woman and critical moments in her life were explored with laughter, tears, honesty and wonderful creativity.

The weekend drew to a close with the AGM, upbeat and forward-looking, notwithstanding regret at the continuing lack of a GA Social Justice Officer. Our photograph, taken by Danielle Wilson, shows most of the group outside Great Hucklow's Old Chapel following Sunday morning worship led by Dawn Buckle (centre, rear). This year's gathering is scheduled for 28-30th October at the Nightingale Centre. Book now with Stella Burney on 01298 871218 or e-mail her on stella@thenightingalecentre.org.uk

— Celia Midgley



Mary Carpenter honoured at Bristol

By Carla Contractor

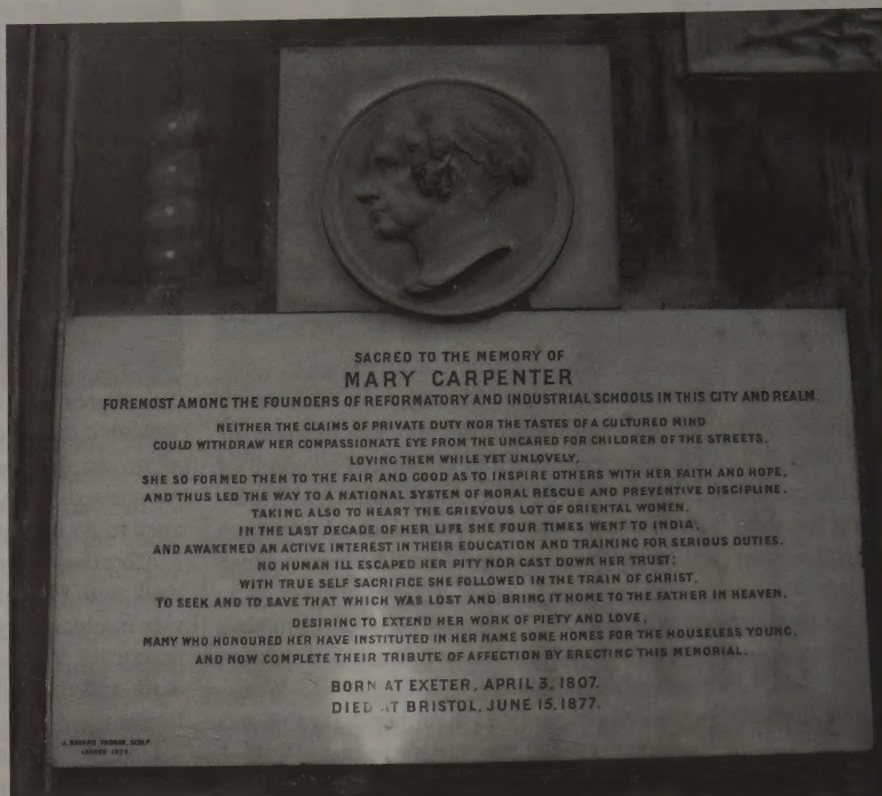
Mary Carpenter is very much a local Bristol celebrity in the city where she worked and lived for most of her life. She is buried in this cemetery, and her grave was recently restored with generous financial help from the Unitarians, the Friends of Arnos Vale, the Co-op Funeral Care and Avon Garden Centre. Her tall granite cross carries four names on its sides; her Father Lant Carpenter, her brother Philip and her sister Anna as well as Mary's own. It stands in a railled-off Unitarian enclave on the Dissenters' side of this cemetery – near several other notable Unitarians including Matthew Davenport Hill, the Recorder of Birmingham and brother of Roland Hill of postal fame.

Lant Carpenter was a famous minister of the enormous Lewins Mead Meeting near the docks in the city, and he ran a boarding school in his house in Clifton – James Martineau was a pupil there. He was a few years older than Mary, who shared all the lessons with her Father's pupils and so enjoyed an unusual and excellent education. Mary trained as a teacher but later in her 40s became major reformer in penal affairs and education, starting ragged schools in the city, and opening the first British reformatories for boys and girls. She was a founder member of the influential Society for the Development of Social Science, to which most of the Victorian reformers belonged in time. She ended the imprisonment of young children, insisted on universal primary education in the country and made the country aware that love and care were better than harsh punishment for the children of the streets.

Her influence was felt via the many books she wrote, including her seminal 'Reformatory Schools', 'Our Convicts' and 'Children of the Perishing and Dangerous classes'. When her work in Britain had taken hold on the British conscience she turned her attention to India, and went there four times in her 60s to carry out similar reforms under the Raj, and to start schools for girls. She went, she said, in memory of 'the spirit of my beloved father, and the noble rajah'. This Rajah was Rammohun Roy, sometimes called the Founder of Modern India, who came to visit her father in 1833 but unfortunately died at Bristol of meningitis.

His famous chattri or funeral monument also stands in Arnos Vale, and Mary took to her heart the many Bengalis and Indians who visited the grave on pilgrimage. Mary never forgot Rammohun Roy and determined to further his pioneering educational work in his homeland.

The commemoration of Mary is the first official service celebrating her life and work by the Arnos Vale Cemetery Trust, and it took place in the restored multi-faith chapel there. The service was reflective and gentle with Indian hymns and Bach's music to accompany it. Mary's life and importance was outlined by Carla Contractor, as both a Trustee of the cemetery and a Unitarian. Two ministers attended, the Revs



The Memorial to Mary Carpenter, North Transept of St Augustine's Cathedral (Bristol). When Mary Carpenter died more than £2,500 was raised by public donations in order to erect a memorial to her, and to contribute to her 'good causes'. Photo by Adrian Pingstone

Lindy Latham from Bristol and Feargus O'Connor from Golders Green in London. There were contributions from a young lady Anna, and a girl Sarah who bravely read one of Mary's poems. Both of them come from Bright Lights, an inter-generational group in Bristol. Extracts from Mary's records of the Red Lodge Reformatory demonstrated how difficult Mary's work had been. Lindy spoke of Mary's faith and Feargus traced the development of the Hindu Unitarian church, which became the influential Brahmo Samaj of India. Another Trustee, Hildegard Dumper, analysed the Indo-British links, and how the Rajah had inspired Mary. The service was solemn and admiring of Mary: it celebrated her successes and courage, her determination and sense of duty. It was conducted with a strong Unitarian theme and presence.

Mary's grave was later viewed by several visitors with a tour guide, Dave Napier, who also showed other notable graves close by. Finally the congregation went on to the Education Centre in the cemetery and enjoyed each other's company over hot drinks and cakes, which were served with grace and a smile by a group of Friends of Arnos Vale, who give much time and energy to the upkeep and restoration of the cemetery. It is hoped that this commemoration will become an annual event, perhaps held in June when Mary died. Ideas for a radio documentary and perhaps a play or TV film about her were discussed. A new biography is nearly completed. Mary Carpenter – neglected for far too long – seems due for some serious historical attention and validation!

Carla Contractor is a member of the Bristol and Golders Green congregations.

Remembrance Sunday at the Cenotaph

By Neville Kenyon

Thousands of people attend the Remembrance Sunday ceremony at the Cenotaph in London's Whitehall.

The Unitarian General Assembly traditionally receives an invitation for the president to attend the ceremony together with representatives of other faith communities. There are, in total, 14 different faith groups represented and these are: the Roman Catholics, the Salvation Army, Methodists, United Reformed, Baptists, Orthodox Jews, Reform Jews, Buddhists, Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus, Greek Orthodox and of course the Anglicans and the Unitarians.

So, as president, I was proud and honoured to represent the whole of our Unitarian community at this important national event. My wife, Betty was also invited and was fortunate to be able to view the whole of the ceremony from a balcony in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office overlooking Whitehall.

As we walked across Horse Guards Parade towards our allotted entrance we witnessed the huge number of armed service personnel who were grouping there in preparation for the parade. The degree of precision involved in marshalling the grand march-past and indeed the whole ceremony was quite breathtaking.

On entering the Foreign Office I soon spotted my fellow faith representatives – most were in their robes of office – and they turned out to be quite a friendly bunch. The political leaders and High Commissioners gathered with us in the same room as did the heads of each of the armed services and equeuries to members of the Royal Family.

Among the people with whom I had a chat were John Bercow, the Speaker of the House of Commons, Ed Milliband, Gordon Brown, Elfyn Llwyn, the leader of Plaid Cymru and William Hague. There were dozens of ushers, mostly young civil servants who volunteer to be on duty and are extremely well briefed. It was good to see how well they marshalled the senior politicians into pairs for them to descend the staircase and into Whitehall for their wreath laying ceremonies.

The rest of us followed in procession and on one of the staircase landings on glancing to my right, there a few feet



General Assembly president Neville Kenyon represented Unitarians along with leaders from 13 other faith groups at the laying of wreaths at the Cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday. He is toward the centre of the photograph. See detail below. Photo by Louis Loizou, who accompanied His Eminence the Archbishop Gregorios of Thyateira and Great Britain representing the Greek Orthodox Church.

away was Her Majesty the Queen with the Duke of Edinburgh awaiting their turn to enter Whitehall.

We faith representatives were lined up immediately behind the High Commissioners and I was placed between the leader of the Reform Jews and the Salvation Army Territorial Commander.

Immediately following the service and the main wreath laying, the principal guests were led into the Locarno Room of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office where we were greeted by William Hague as Foreign Secretary. This is a sumptuous room recently refurbished and here we enjoyed more conversation and refreshments.

The picture was taken by Louis Loizou, who accompanied His Eminence the Archbishop Gregorios of Thyateira and Great Britain representing the Greek Orthodox Church. Betty and Louis shared the viewing balcony and he sent her his pictures following the event.

The pomp and ceremony seems to emphasise rather than detract from the whole purpose of the event which is to remember with gratitude and respect those who have given their lives for their country in times of war. Perhaps



even more important is the formal and public remembrance of the tragic results of war and a resolve by all the leaders of our nation to resist going to war in the future.

This leads me and I suspect most Unitarians to query the justification for our current and long term involvement in the Afghanistan conflict – the debate continues and shows how the best of intentions are so often frustrated by conflicting imperatives.

Neville Kenyon is president of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches.

Another 'Discover Yourself' outing planned

By Kathy Beckett

September saw a gathering of 19 Unitarians from the South, meeting for a weekend entitled 'Discover Yourself', at Ivy house, Warminster. On Friday eve we sang songs from our purple Unitarian hymn book *Sing your Faith* and after supper the room was buzzing with the usual get-to-know you session where everyone had brought an object to talk about.

On Saturday morning we joined Jan Laker for morning meditation on the lawn, a Sufi welcome to the elements. After breakfast, we began the first session to learn about ourselves through the use of the Enneagram personality indicator. This was ably facilitated by Josephine Seccombe, an inspiration to all participants. A small group enjoyed an alternative programme of music, poetry and discussion.

The afternoon saw us doing our own thing, some to explore the wonderful garden with its many different plants, some to the Nature Reserve nearby, some to enjoy the delights of a local tea shop and still others went on a strenuous walk up Westbury Hill.

After the second Enneagram session, the eve saw us in small creative groups engaged in poetry, Taizé singing, writing prayers, dance and drama.

On Sunday morning we again met on the lawn for Ti-Chi led by David Talbot. After breakfast we planned our DIY service with the assistance of the delightful Rev Akasha Lonsdale, an Interfaith minister and psychotherapist. After coffee we all joined in the service which proved to be a moving experience and the highlight of the week for some.

After lunch we were led in Dances of Universal Peace by the talented Matthew Heyse-Moore, followed by plenary and



A group of Unitarians from the South enjoyed a weekend discovering themselves.

goodbyes, some saying it was the best Unitarian weekend they had ever attended and asking for more!

So more they will get! Josephine has agreed to facilitate "Going further in the Enneagram", Sept 16-18 for people who have already done some of the basics, even if elsewhere. The weekend will take place in this beautiful Anglican Retreat House as before. There will be a supporting programme. Please e-mail me kathy@kpb.gotadsl.co.uk if you are interested. We are also doing a basics day event on 14 May, hopefully somewhere near Oxford but the venue is not arranged as yet. Again, e-mail me if interested.

Kathy Beckett is a member of Edmund Kell, Southampton.

Hucklow Summer School 2011

For Personal and Leadership Development

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Living a Life of Greater Integrity



20th to 27th August 2011
Great Hucklow, Derbyshire

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The GA of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches, Registered Charity: No. 250788.

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